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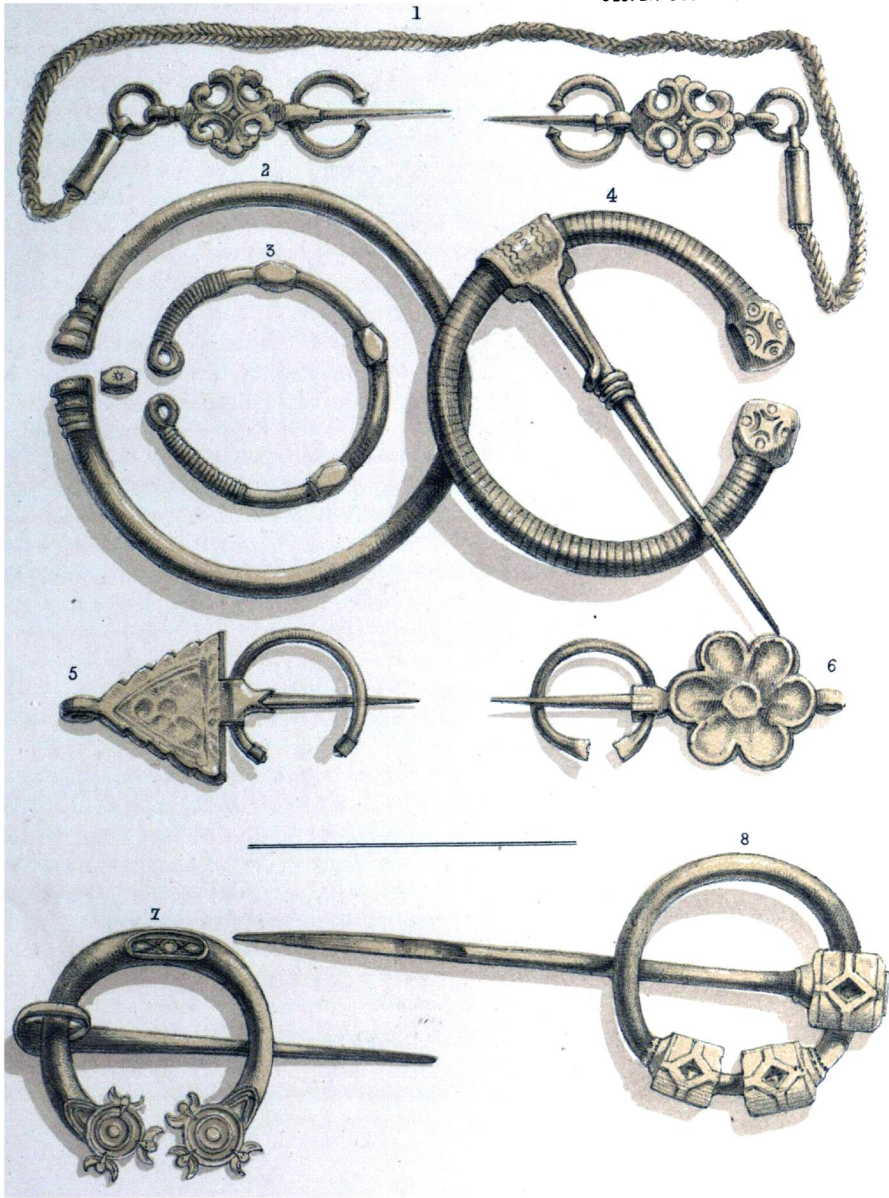
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AFRICAN AND IRISH FIBULÆ.

The singular fact, that metallic rings, cleft at one side, and quite identical in form with those found so frequently in Ireland, are actually used at the present day in Western Africa as money, was made known some time ago by Sir William Betham. [*Etruria Celtica*, vol. 2.] The theory proposed previously by him, that the Irish rings had been used for the same purpose, was thus corroborated. The discovery was made in consequence of a ship, which was bound on a trading voyage to Africa, being shipwrecked on the coast of the county Cork, in 1836. Mr. Richard Saint-hill, of Cork, ascertained that, among the articles on board, intended for barter with the natives, were some boxes of *cast-iron rings*, extremely resembling those found in Ireland of *gold*; and on applying for further information to the owner of the vessel, a Liverpool merchant, he learned that the ship was bound for the river Bonney, or New Calabar, not far distant from the Kingdom of Benin. In exchange for the productions of that country, chiefly palm-oil and ivory, it appeared that there were regularly sent, besides various British manufactured goods, a quantity of these rings made in imitation of the current money of the natives, and known by the name of *manillas*. It was stated that the people of the Eboe country, and all the neighbouring districts, use no other kind of money in their commercial transactions; and that this Liverpool mercantile house sent out to the coast of Africa annually about forty chests of such rings, which were manufactured in Birmingham. They were formerly made exclusively of bronze, (copper and tin,) but subsequently they were sent entirely of cast-iron; which seems at length to have given dissatisfaction to the natives, for of late, we understand, no more have been sent. Besides these *manillas* of bronze, we have it on the authority of Mr. Bonomi, the well-known African traveller, that gold ones are likewise extensively used in Africa. In Ireland they are almost always found made of this metal. One instance only is mentioned where, in opening a tumulus in the county Monaghan, about the year 1810, several thousands of these rings were discovered made of bronze. They were sold to a dealer in metal, and melted down; but one specimen is still preserved in the collection of Dr. Petrie, in Dublin, and perfectly agrees in shape with the African ones. The word *manilla* is Spanish, and signifies a "bracelet;" hence it is probable that these rings, or some varieties of them, are used by the Africans as personal ornaments as well as money. In fact, Dr. Madden mentioned, at a meeting of the Royal Irish Academy [*Proceedings*, vol. 4, p. 389] that he had himself seen gold rings, precisely similar to those found in Ireland, worn as bracelets by women both on the East and West coast of Africa. There is nothing unreasonable, therefore, in the supposition that the Irish likewise used their gold rings (many of which are ornamental in form) both as bracelets and money.



AFRICAN & IRISH FIBULÆ.

Another curious link of connection between Africa and Ireland has recently been discovered by Mr. Francis M. Jennings, of Cork, during a tour in Morocco last year. At Tangier and Mogador he was struck on observing the peasantry wearing brooches or fibulæ of the peculiar shape so familiar to all collectors of Antiquities in Ireland. He made inquiries on the subject, and ascertained that this particular form of ornament has been used by the people of the country for an unknown period of time. He procured a number of specimens, which he has kindly sent to us with permission to publish engravings of them. The annexed plate exhibits the chief varieties; and, for the purpose of comparison, we have added two drawings of fibulæ found in Ireland. It will be observed that the general form and the style of ornamentation are extremely similar: and although we are not aware of any single Irish specimen having been met with which in all particulars corresponds with any of the African ones, we could point out in Irish collections examples of every ornament here employed, though combined in a different manner. It would be interesting to know what forms and ornaments are given to similar brooches used by the higher orders in Africa; as it is very possible that we might find among them some of the peculiarities of our more elaborate Irish fibulæ. It would seem that the ring-money and the circular brooches belong to the same class, and were naturally derived the one from the other; for, by simply adding a pin, the bracelet was converted into a fibula.

The circular cleft fibula is an ornament which has been employed from time immemorial among the Gaelic people of the British islands. In Ireland it has long ceased to be worn, because the old costume of the country totally disappeared during the fearful commotions which preceded the final subjugation of this country by the English. But down to the present day this form of brooch has continued universal among the Highlanders of Scotland; and "in many Highland families of various ranks favourite brooches have been preserved through many generations as heir-looms, which no pecuniary inducement would tempt their humblest owner to part with." [*Pre-historic Annals of Scotland.*] Martin mentions them as common 200 years ago in the Western Islands; and the Rev. John Buchanan, in his *Travels in the Western Hebrides* in 1782, states that the circular brooches have been worn there from the remotest period even by ladies of rank. He says—"All the women wear a small plaid, a yard broad, called *guilechan*, about their shoulders, fastened by a large brooch. These brooches are generally round, and of silver, if the wearer be in tolerable circumstances; if poor, the brooches, being either circular or triangular, are of base metal." The mention here of *triangular* fibulæ used by the lower classes is curious, when we find, by referring to our plate of African fibulæ, that one of these, (No. 5,) which is almost devoid of ornament, and which is, in fact, worn by the lower order of natives only, is also *triangular*.

Besides the authority of popular tradition, we know of at least one of the old classic authors who mentions the ancient use of brooches in Scotland. Solinus, who lived in the third century, says [*cap.* 35] that the use of the fibula was common to all the men and women of Caledonia. And we cannot omit an interesting and suggestive fact connected with the antiquity of the fibula, viz.,

that the very form of brooch now dug up in the bogs of Ireland, and still worn by the Highlanders of Scotland and the Moors of Barbary, was also worn by that mysterious ancient people, the Etruscans. In opening some of their tombs, bodies of females have been found girt with a broad belt below the breast, fastened in front with a *wheel-shaped buckle*. [K. O. Müller, *Transactions of the Royal Academy of Berlin*, 1818, 1819.]

We now give a few particulars relating to the objects represented on the plate.

Fig. 1 is a couple of small Fibulæ, connected by a chain, [all being of silver. These are from Mogador; but are worn likewise in other parts of Barbary. They are placed one on each side of the cloak or garment, in front, the chain hanging down in a curve, and the pins turned across the circles, with their points uppermost.

Fig. 2 is a silver Ear-ring worn by the men of Soos, the southern district of Morocco. The little bead of silver, represented separately opposite to the opening, is put in after the ring has been inserted in the ear, to prevent it from slipping out; and it is retained in its place by the spring of the metal.

Fig. 3. A bronze Armlet, which Mr. Jennings obtained from the arm of the Sheikh of Wednoon.

Fig. 4. A silver Fibula from Tangier, worn by the peasantry of the neighbourhood.

Figs. 5 and 6 are small Fibulæ made of cast brass, of the cheapest kind, and used only by the common people. Procured at Tangier.

Fig. 7. An Irish Fibula, of silver, dug up in the supposed remains of a tumulus about three miles south-east of the town of Galway, in 1853. Now in the collection of Edward Hoare, Esq., Cork.

Fig. 8. An Irish Fibula, of silver, found near Tralee, in 1856, now in the possession of Mr. James H. Greaves, Jeweller, Cork.

The antiquarian world is much indebted to intelligent travellers, like Mr. Jennings, who can thus make the knowledge acquired in their own country available in eliciting new information. We are convinced that further researches will disclose various other curious analogies between the customs of Africa and Ireland. It is premature to speculate on the source of these analogies; but a wide field of conjecture is opening to the archæologist; and it is to be hoped that, in this travelling age, we shall soon hear of further interesting discoveries in this department of knowledge.

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